

SEEING AND BELIEVING

'I have seen the Lord!' Mary Magdalene's Easter morning cry rang out after Jesus called her by name. Mary had been dismayed earlier, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.'

This event was etched into the disciples minds forever. The rest of their lives they would rehearse where they were on that day. It had been a hard call. They had been dizzy with despair. They had shared such a compelling vision and had given up everything to follow Jesus. They had left businesses, fishing nets and family ties to follow the wandering teacher. Jesus had trained them as heralds of the new kingdom. But no more - it was all over. The kingdom needed a king, and he was gone. The inner terrain of their lives lay in rubble. Now what? Go back home? Had Jesus brought them this far only to leave them?

One of the followers, a woman, stood at the side of the tomb and wept. Her hope was gone. Her grief was unbearable. Jesus had restored her whole life. What now? Then he came to her and asked, 'Dear lady, why are you weeping?' We know why you were weeping. 'There is no hope now.' had become the beat of their broken hearts.

The first resurrection did not come to people of privilege. It came to people who were at the end of their rope. It came to those who were devastated because the restored kingdom they had longed for would not occur now. How could they pull any meaning out of this great tragedy?

The Resurrection happened, not with trumpet sounds, Easter lilies and a great burst of sunlight, but in the early morning, while it was still too dark to see clearly.

There are a number of reactions to the resurrection of Jesus. Rationalism says that it must be rejected because it does not fit into human reason – only that which can be perceived and explained can be true. Then there is unbelief which refuses to believe the facts. Honest doubt has real questions waiting to be resolved; hypocritical doubt continues to question long after the available evidence is made clear. Indifference says, 'Whatever, I don't care.' Ignorance, another reaction, is not bliss. Hostility discredits the resurrection and makes it public. The there is the response of faith. The whole theme of the New Testament is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was raised by the power of God. Easter means hope.

The women are in the resurrection garden first. Why were they the first to see the angel? Because they were there at the right place at the right time. They had ministered with Jesus, attended to his needs, gone to Jerusalem for the Passover, been there at the cross, saw him buried – loyalty and devotion personified. The women, Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleophas and Salome the mother of James and John came to see the grave. There is an earthquake and the grave opens. An angel moved the stone not to let the Lord out but to let the women in. Mary was to the women what Peter was to

the disciples. Mary Magdalene ran to tell Peter and John. The angel calms everybody down at the tomb, then says, 'Go quickly and tell the others the news. Jesus is going to Galilee, you'll meet him there.'

This is where Jesus so often chooses to meet us – at home.

So, he appeared to Mary, he appeared to Peter, he appeared to the Emmaus couple, to the ten disciples – Thomas and Judas were missing. Each time Jesus came he spoke of the kingdom of God. Mary meets Jesus in a garden and speaks to the 'gardener', 'They have taken away my Lord and I don't know where they have laid him.' Jesus calls her by her real name Miriam and she recognizes her Lord in that moment and says, 'Master!' Jesus knows us all by name. She finally lets Jesus go from her welcoming arms and he says, 'Go and tell my disciples and tell them that I am going back soon to my Father God.'

Following Jesus' death some of his closest friends went back fishing and after a great catch inspired by Jesus they are hungry and head for shore. Guess what? Jesus is cooking breakfast for them on the beach! Suddenly they thought of the times when Jesus had fed multitudes with the same food – fish and bread.

In John's Gospel Jesus begins his ministry by attending a wedding and turning water into wine and ends his ministry with a fish breakfast on the beach with his friends. Let us expect to meet him in the everyday tasks of living.

On this Easter Day, 'Seeing is believing and believing is truly seeing'. God enable us to both see and believe, for his name's sake. AMEN



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